United Nations A/C.5/55/SR.51

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
2 April 2001

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 51st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 23 March 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. Dinić (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Croatia)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 132: Financing of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone

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In the absence of Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala), Ms. Dinić (Croatia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 132: Financing of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (A/55/805 and Corr.1, A/55/839)

1. **Mr. Yeo** (Director, Peacekeeping Financing Division), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the revised budget for the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) for the period from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001 (A/55/805 and Corr.1), said that by its resolution 54/241 B, based on the authorized strength of 11,100 military personnel, the General Assembly had appropriated $504.3 million gross for the maintenance of the Mission for the current period, inclusive of the cost of its prorated share for the support account and the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi. Subsequently, as a result of Security Council decisions, the Division had informed the Committee that for the period 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001, pending the submission of the revised budget currently before the Committee, the additional costs associated with the expansion of the military component of UNAMSIL to a maximum of 13,000 personnel would be covered within the resources already approved. The revised budget amounted to $561.9 million gross, an increase of $85.2 million or 17.9 per cent in gross terms over the current approved appropriation.

2. The overall increase was attributable to the expansion of the Mission, with deployment of the additional 1,900 contingent personnel, along with 260 military observers and 60 civilian police advisers, supported by an increased civilian staffing establishment of 385 international and 601 local staff, as well as 92 United Nations Volunteers, and requirements for air operations, acquisition of prefabricated office containers, transportation, communications and other equipment. The overall increase also reflected the repatriation of two contingents and the induction of replacement troops.

3. The actions to be taken by the General Assembly were to approve additional financing for UNAMSIL of $85.2 million and to assess that amount.

4. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman, Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ)), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee (A/55/839), said that approximately $361.6 million, or 55.3 per cent, of the revised estimates for UNAMSIL were for military costs to cover the requirements of 12,740 troops and 260 military observers. The military estimates were examined in paragraphs 9 to 21 of the report of the Advisory Committee. The latest report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (S/2001/228) conveyed the possibility of increasing troop strength to 17,500. If the Security Council were to expand military strength, a separate submission would be made.

5. Subject to the observations it had made, the Advisory Committee agreed with the revised estimate for military costs. He drew attention to the comments on contingent-owned equipment and the difficulties UNAMSIL had experienced in applying wet lease arrangements.

6. Civilian personnel costs were examined in paragraphs 22 to 49 of the report. The Advisory Committee had made a number of recommendations which should be borne in mind when implementing the budget and preparing the next estimates. With respect to the post of Deputy Force Commander, it recommended that the decision on the method of funding should be deferred so as to enable the Secretariat to justify the proposed change when the UNAMSIL estimates for 2001-2002 were examined later in 2001. Accordingly, the Secretariat should continue to fund the position of Deputy Force Commander using the current method until the Advisory Committee reviewed a possible change in method.

7. The other comments of the Advisory Committee on travel, on the use of volunteers and on operational costs were contained in paragraphs 50 to 65 of its report, and its conclusions were found in paragraph 66. It recommended an appropriation of $550 million for the Mission for the period ending 30 June 2001, $73.3 million more than the current appropriation of $476.7 million which had already been assessed on Member States. The adjustment of the revised estimates was therefore about 2 per cent.

8. Initial peacekeeping budgets had consistently reported underexpenditures even after reductions recommended by ACABQ. The most recent examples were the missions in Kosovo and East Timor, where underexpenditures of 15 per cent and 17 per cent

respectively had been reported for the period ending 30 June 2000. The Advisory Committee expected that the experience might be repeated for UNAMSIL, as indicated in several paragraphs of its report. It therefore invited the General Assembly to consider assessing at the current stage an additional amount of $36.6 million, for a cumulative total assessment for the period ending 30 June 2001 of $513.4 million gross. The Secretary-General would have commitment authority of up to $550 million for mission needs and would report in September, on the basis of performance, whether the balance of $36.6 million should be assessed on Member States.

9. **Mr. Lenefors** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the situation in Sierra Leone constituted a real challenge to the United Nations and the international community. The European Union was grateful for the contributions of all countries and the support rendered to UNAMSIL.

10. Because of its size and complexity, UNAMSIL must be managed with the utmost efficiency. The European Union took note of the revised budget for the Mission proposed by the Secretary-General and the related report of ACABQ. It shared some of the Advisory Committee's concerns on operational aspects, including mission structure and management. It was concerned about whether it would be possible to recruit and deploy the requested number of additional staff within the short period of time from March to June 2001 and the impact that staffing levels might have on effectiveness. It would welcome details from the Secretariat on how it intended to tackle the problem. The difficulties experienced with "wet lease" or self-sustainment were being addressed through pre-deployment inspections carried out with the agreement of potential troop contributors. The European Union looked forward to the outcome of the overall policy review of those arrangements; in the meantime, it requested more details on whether those services had been contracted out and, if so, the effect on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Mission.

11. The European Union regretted that it must return to the issue of procurement and the related problems pointed out by the Board of Auditors, namely poor inventory management, lack of procurement planning, delay in delivery of goods and shortage of trained staff, and it would like to know what measures had been put in place to remedy the situation. Asset control was another area where the rules and regulations had been poorly applied. The Field Assets Control System had been installed, but steps must be taken to ensure that it was maintained effectively and that staff received appropriate training to address the weaknesses found by the Board of Auditors.

12. The European Union agreed with the recommendation of the Advisory Committee contained in paragraph 66 of its report (A/55/839).

13. **Ms. Merchant** (Norway) said that, in the light of recent improvements in the security situation in Sierra Leone and renewed hopes for the peace process, Norway strongly supported the Secretary-General's request for the strengthening of UNAMSIL. Not all contingents had been able to meet the requirements of self-sustainment, however, and her delegation concurred with ACABQ that the United Nations should take over responsibility for providing additional services. It should carefully review its capacity in terms of qualified personnel, and should consider the option of contracting out some of those services as appropriate. In the light of past experience, her delegation shared the doubts about whether the Mission and Headquarters had the capacity to recruit the requested number of civilian staff and put them in place before June 2001. Thus, the Secretariat should be urged to accelerate the recruitment and placement of civilian personnel. Her delegation supported the request of ACABQ that steps should be taken to ensure that the Field Assets Control System was effectively maintained and staff should be trained to address the weaknesses identified by the Board of Auditors.

14. The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Programme was an attempt to give the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) members an alternative to armed warfare, and was essential to the process of turning RUF into a normal political party. In the view of her delegation, those efforts should be an integral part of the budget for all peace operations; pending such arrangements, it urged all countries which had pledged contributions to that Programme to honour their commitments. It supported the request of ACABQ for information on the Mission's role in the DDR Programme in the next budget submission for UNAMSIL.

15. Finally, Norway concurred with the recommendations of ACABQ contained in paragraph 66 of its report.

16. **Ms. Sun** Minqin (China) said that her Government had supported the process of peace and national reconciliation in Sierra Leone, and hoped that UNAMSIL could be strengthened appropriately and the additional resources utilized effectively.

17. With regard to paragraph 5 of the report of the Advisory Committee (A/55/839), the authorized level of troop strength was 12,740, yet as at 26 February 2001 only 9,544 troops had arrived in the field. She inquired why the additional personnel had not yet taken up their posts. Up to 31 January 2001, the Secretariat had dealt with two settlement claims, with 26 still pending, and she asked for a progress report on those claims. Finally, her delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee regarding the constant increase in travel costs. In its view, communications technology should be fully utilized in order to reduce those costs.

18. **Mr. Khyne-Sam** (Sierra Leone) expressed the appreciation and gratitude of his delegation to all those serving in UNAMSIL and to the international community for providing the resources. The peace process in Sierra Leone was at a critical stage, and he therefore appealed to all troop-contributing countries to speed up deployment of the troops they had pledged so that his country would have the opportunity to enjoy democracy and peace.

19. **Mr. Mutiso** (Finance Management and Support Services, Department of Peacekeeping Operations), replying to the questions posed by Sweden on behalf of the European Union, said that the Secretariat had been aware of the challenges it faced in staff recruitment when the expansion of the Mission had begun. Recruitment of local staff was not as difficult as international staff, of course. The Department had consulted with other agencies at Headquarters and in the field on the secondment of staff, and had adjusted the staffing request to include additional United Nations Volunteers. He believed that all required staff should be on board by 30 June 2001.

20. The local services contract had ended on 30 November 2000, and those duties had reverted to the Mission. Outsourcing was being studied but was not yet in place; in the meantime, day-to-day contracts were being used.

21. Concerning the observations of the Board of Auditors regarding the weaknesses in the Field Assets Control System, the crisis which had occurred in Sierra Leone in April 2000 had made it difficult to track assets. The Secretariat had since taken measures to identify and train qualified staff, and expected the system to run smoothly in the future. It had also instituted measures to ensure that procurement ran smoothly as well, and that qualified procurement officers were in place.

22. With regard to the level of military deployment, 10,356 personnel were on board to date, and clear commitments by contingents gave the assurance that the desired level would be reached by the end of May. Concerning high travel costs, the Mission had been expanding in various areas, and the difficulties in travel were attributable to weaknesses in training of personnel. A large portion of the training budget had been allocated for the area of travel, and he trusted that results would soon be seen in that area.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.